

Some years later the Athenians rebuilt the Long Walls which Ly-san´der, the Spartan general, had torn down to the sound of festive music. They were so glad to be rid of the cruel tyrants, that they erected statues in honor of Thrasybulus, their deliverer, and sang songs in his praise at all their public festivals.

The Spartans, in the mean while, had been changing rapidly for the worse; for the defeat of the Athenians had filled their hearts with pride, and had made them fancy they were the bravest and greatest people on earth. Such conceit is always harmful.

Lysander, in capturing Athens and the smaller towns of Attica, had won much booty, which was all sent to Sparta. The ephors refused at first to accept or distribute this gold, saying that the love of wealth was the root of all evil; but they finally decided to use it for the improvement of their city.

Lysander himself was as noble a man as he was a good general, and kept none of the booty for his own use. On the contrary, he came back to Sparta so poor, that, when he died, the city had to pay his funeral expenses (395 BC). The Spartans felt so grateful for the services which he had rendered them, that they not only gave him a fine burial, but also gave marriage portions to his daughters, and helped them to get good husbands.



LXXII. ACCUSATION OF SOCRATES.

SOCRATES, as you know, was one of the best and gentlest of men, yet he had many enemies. These were principally the people who were jealous of him and of his renown for great wisdom; for his reputation was so well established, that the oracle at Delphi, when consulted, replied that the most learned man in Greece was Socrates.

Although Socrates was so wise and good and gentle, he was not at all conceited, and showed his wisdom by never pretending to know what he did not know, and by his readiness to learn anything new, provided one could prove it to be true.

Among the noted Athenians of this time was Aristophanes, a writer of comedies or funny plays. He was so witty that his comedies are still admired almost as much as when they were played in the Theater of Dionysus for the amusement of the people.

Like most funny men, Aristophanes liked to turn everything into ridicule. He had often seen Socrates and Alcibiades walking through the streets of Athens, and was greatly amused at the contrast they presented.

Now, Aristophanes, with all his cleverness, was not always just; and while his ridicule sometimes did good, at other times it did a great deal of harm. He soon learned to dislike Alcibiades; but he saw how dearly the people loved the young man, and fancied that his faults must be owing to the bad advice of his teacher. Such was not the case, for Socrates had tried to bring out all the good in his pupil. Alcibiades' pride, insolence, and treachery were rather the result of the constant flattery to which he had been exposed on the part of those who claimed to be his friends.

Aristophanes disliked Alcibiades so much that he soon wrote a comedy called *The Clouds*, in which he made fun of him (423 BC). Of course, he did not call the people in the play by their real names; but the hero was a good-for-nothing young man, who, advised by his teacher, bought fast horses, ran his father into debt, cheated everybody, and treated even the gods with disrespect.

As the actors who took part in this comedy dressed and acted as nearly as possible like Alcibiades and Socrates, you can imagine that the play, which was very comical and clever, made the Athenians roar with laughter.

Everybody talked about it, repeated the best jokes, and went again and again to see and laugh over it. We are told that Socrates went there himself one day; and, when asked why he had come, he quietly said, "I came to find out whether, among all the faults of which I am accused, there may not be some that I can correct."

You see, the philosopher knew that it was never too late to mend, and fully intended to be as perfect as possible. He knew, of course, that he could not straighten his crooked nose or make his face good-looking, but he hoped to find some way of improving his character.

The Clouds amused the Athenians for about twenty years; and when Alcibiades turned traitor, and caused the ruin of his country, the people still went to see it. In their anger against Alcibiades, they began to think that perhaps Aristophanes was right, and that the youth they had once loved so dearly would never have turned out so badly had he not been influenced for evil.

As the teacher in the play was blamed for all the wrongdoing of his pupil, so Socrates was now accused by the Athenians of ruining Alcibiades. Little by little the philosopher's enemies became so bold that they finally made up their minds to get rid of him. As he was quite innocent, and as there was no other excuse for dragging him before the Tri-

bunal, they finally charged him with giving bad advice to young men, and speaking ill of the gods.



LXXIII. DEATH OF SOCRATES.

THE false accusation made against Socrates by his enemies soon had the desired effect, for the Tribunal gave orders for his arrest and trial. The philosopher, sure of his innocence, came before his judges, and calmly answered their questions.

He told them he had never turned the gods into ridicule, as he knew it was wrong to make fun of anything which others deemed sacred. Then, as they still further pressed him to explain his views, he confessed that he believed there was a God greater and better than any they worshiped.

As to teaching the young men anything which could do them harm, he said it was quite impossible; for he had ever told them that they should be as good, virtuous, and helpful as they could, which was surely not wrong.

Socrates gave noble answers to all their questions; but the judges, blinded with prejudice, believed the lying charges of his enemies, which Socrates scorned to contradict. The philosopher's friends begged him to use his eloquence to defend himself and confound his accusers; but he calmly refused, saying, "My whole life and teaching is the only contradiction, and the best defense I can offer."

Socrates, as you have seen, was really one of the best men that ever lived, and, without having ever heard of the true God, he still believed in Him (Rom 1:19-20). Nearly four centuries before the coming of Christ, when people believed in revenge, he taught his students to "Love one another" and "Do good to them that hate you;" doctrines established centuries before by Moses; but of whom, however, Socrates never had heard.

But, in spite of all his goodness and constant uprightness, Socrates the philosopher was condemned to the shameful death of a base criminal. Now, in Greece, criminals were forced to drink a cup of deadly poison at sunset on the day of their condemnation, and there was generally but a few hours' delay between the sentence and its execution. But the law said that during one month in the year no such punishment should be inflicted. This was while an Athenian vessel was away on a voyage to the island of De'los to bear the annual offerings to Apollo's shrine.